1796.
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TEN MINUTES ADDRESS

TO

ENGLISHMEN.

BY A LOYAL SUBJECT.

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TEN MINUTES ADDRESS

TO

ENGLISHMEN.

COUNTRYMEN, AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

AT this awful, this critical moment, when every individual, zealous for the welfare of his Country, experiences the accumulated horrors of ſuſpenſe and apprehenſion;—while the clouds of civil and domeſtic diſcord ſeem hourly gathering round our heads,—and while foreign hoſtilities threaten to be the reſult of the preſent ſyſtem of European Politics, I ſhall not apologize for arreſting the attention of the Public for a few ſhort moments. Inexperienced in the forms of lo-

gical diſquiſition, and little verſed in the minute intricacies of argumentative ſophiſtry, I ſhall, in the following obſervations, rely ſolely on the force of pure, undiſguiſed veracity, and ſpeak not from the *head*, but the *heart*. I appeal to the feelings of every true Engliſhman, unbiaſſed by party prejudice or party malice. I addreſs myſelf only to thoſe men who will judge with *impartiality*, and decide with *juſtice*; who will *think* before they *act;* and who, guided by the honeſt dictates of rectitude and loyalty, will ſupport any meaſures, beſt adapted to ſecure the intereſt of the Subject, the welfare of the Conſtitution, and the juſt and unalienable prerogative of the Crown.

No good Subject of theſe realms can hear his Sovereign contemptuouſly ridiculed, his Miniſtry groſsly calumniated, and the Conſtitution of his Country threatened

threatened with univerſal demolition, with calmneſs, or in ſilence. Animated by thoſe ſenſations, which at ſo critical a juncture, ſhould warm the breaſt of every honeſt man, I advance in the cauſe of Freedom, or as the vitiated language of Democracy will aſſert, in the cauſe of Deſpotiſm; for in the eyes of our ephemeral democrats, every act of Royalty appears unconſtitutional; every exertion of monarchical authority, deſpotic: but Deſpotiſm is a word which ſhould be eraſed from the Britiſh vocabulary; it conveys a connected chain of ideas ſcarcely intelligible to a Britiſh imagination, nor can any Engliſhman give a ſtrict and juſt definition of a term ſo uncongenial to his natural feelings: his beſt knowledge of its ſignification reſts on vague and uncertain conjecture.

In the full enjoyment of every reaſonable

able privilege, bleſt in the poſſeſſion of a Conſtitution, in its fundamental principles unimproveable, and perfect but for the decays inherent to every human inſtitution, ſhould we ruſh forward with ſuch miſguided folly, ſuch wild impetuoſity, to ſubvert the order and harmony of ſociety; by Rebellion to diſorganize the different Members of the Conſtitution, and overturn that ſyſtem which has reflected honour and dignity on our anceſtors, happineſs on ourſelves, and which, to every contemplative mind, promiſes to ſecure the welfare of poſterity?

Few men poſſeſs ſo large a portion of ſelf-ſufficiency, ſuch an abſtracted reliance on their own merits, as voluntarily to ſtep forward, or anxiouſly take the lead in moments of conſequence and importance. Hence it is that collective bodies of men are more eaſily corrupted, and are

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inticed from the direct and eaſy path of rectitude with greater facility than individuals.

Hurried away by the leading principle of a Party, we rarely ſcrutinize with rigour and impartiality thoſe collateral and attendant circumſtances, which in the aggregate ſhould form the preciſe rule of our actions.

The Parliament of Great Britain, like every other corporate body, can boaſt the ſteady protection of an honeſt rectitude in many, I firmly believe in the majority of its component Members; but it is, in a ſimilar manner, open to the machinations of corruption and deceit.

From theſe inherent qualities ariſe certain errors which have inſinuated themſelves into the boſom of our political eſtabliſhments.

tabliſhments. There are ſome few of our Repreſentatives in Parliament who are not perhaps always elected with the moſt ſtrict attention to the original principles of that inſtitution; nor will any one be ſufficiently hardy to deny that ſome Reform in this Repreſentation of the People is neceſſary. Every admirer of our happy Conſtitution muſt acknowledge, that the unequalled wiſdom, the penetrating foreſight of our anceſtors, at the period of this glorious eſtabliſhment in 1688, has amply provided againſt all the decays which time might occaſion to the envied fabric they were conſtructing, by veſting in the immediate Repreſentative Body of the People, the power of correcting and amending in it what in their wiſdom they judged it to require: but in no other part of the Community does this power exiſt. We muſt not be over haſty in drawing our concluſions from

from uncertain theories; we muſt weigh well every different conſideration, and be guided in our actions by the falling ſcale; we muſt recapitulate the various arguments on either ſide, before we can determine the point required; the Judge muſt ſum up the evidence before the Jury can aſſign a verdict: beſides innovations are always dangerous, as the ſlighteſt variation from eſtabliſhed rules, may terminate in the total derangement of the beſt regulated ſyſtem. Reformation is, or ought to be the work of time; we ſhould approach the object by ſlow and cautious ſteps, before we make the graſp, or by our too great anxiety and eagerneſs to ſnatch it, we may overleap the mark, and loſe the object of our purſuit.

If you doubt the truth of this aſſertion, pauſe for a moment; reflect on the late unhappy ſituation of a neighbouring nation;

tion: the French have ſurely inſtructed us in a leſſon worthy our moſt earneſt attention, " The danger and folly of raſh and inconſiderate Reform;" for although the various abuſes, which previous to the late Revolution pervaded every Member of the French Government, had been accumulating from time immemorial; though they appeared to have ariſen to the higheſt pitch of infamy and corruption, and conſequently to have required an effectual overthrow, ſurely if their Republican Reformers had given one moment to conſideration, or had liſtened to the common ſuggeſtions of reaſon and policy, they would have checked the progreſs of their ſchemes ſo inconſiderately planned, till by deliberation and addreſs they could have enſured their ſubſequent ſucceſs, without thoſe ſcenes of maſſacres and bloodſhed which have now caſt an indelible blot on the national character.

Learn

Learn then, from their example, to be prudent; conſider the evils that muſt neceſſarily ariſe from any infringement of the expreſs laws of the realm, or any direct violation of principles founded on ſound policy and civil juſtice; and at the ſame time candidly enumerate thoſe fictitious bleſſings to be derived from the ſubverſion of the moſt perfect ſyſtem of human policy.

Let us not give credit to thoſe hypocritical and deſigning apoſtates in politics, who will at one moment dwell with apparent rapture on the principles of our Conſtitution, and in the next artfully lament the depravity of human nature, the corruption of the times, and the errors which have gradually crept into every department of it. Errors indeed, have ariſen, but they are groſsly miſrepreſented by thoſe men who ſtate them as enormous,

mous, or insufferable; they are comparatively trifling and insignificant.

The great object of the Legislative Body ought to be, and *is*, the preservation of the honour as well as tranquillity of these realms, from the attacks of foreign or domestic enemies; and England has less to dread from the united efforts of the combined powers of Europe, than from the secret conspiracies of a few guilty individuals, who have possessed themselves of the most private recesses of the country, to disseminate and cherish the seeds of disaffection and rebellion. These are our most dangerous enemies; like deep and dark assassins, they appear with smiles and openness, while rancour and malignity lurk within; they offer one hand in friendship, and with the other plunge a dagger to the heart: believe me, unless you are well guarded, they will imperceptibly

ceptibly draw you on by ſpecious pretences, and inſinuating addreſs, to imagine that abuſes are daily accumulating; that the nation is a bankrupt—monarchy a feather—by urging the neceſſity of a partial, though immediate Reformation. They will earneſtly promote your deſtruction, and perhaps, by multiplied villanies, accompliſh their own malevolent intentions, by creating univerſal anarchy, civil diſcord, and domeſtic bloodſhed. They will arm man againſt man, brother againſt brother, and citizen againſt citizen; cheared by the hopes of gaining a paltry independence in the general confuſion: they will cheriſh univerſal miſery, and deluge England with the blood of her deareſt ſubjects.

Daily experience informs us, that certain illegal doctrines, certain inflammatory principles, are induſtriouſly propagated,

gated, for the expreſs purpoſe of creating animoſities between different branches of the Conſtitution, and of promoting treaſon, anarchy, and rebellion. Till effective meaſures are adopted to quiet the voice of ſedition, and reſtore the general equilibrium; till the Legiſlative Body puniſhes the promulgators of unconſtitutional principles; till the furious ſpirit of unlimited democracy is *compelled* to ſubſide, public happineſs will be trampled upon, and perhaps ultimately cruſhed, by private malevolence, and the welfare of the Community ſacrificed to the unprincipled rancour of the deſigning few.

What do men mean at the preſent period, by loudly calling for a general redreſs of grievances? where do ſuch grievances exiſt in this Kingdom? nowhere, but in the reſtleſs fears of gloomy imagination,

nation, or the idle fancies of a few bigoted enthuſiaſtic fanatics.

The human mind, ever buſy and inventive, is too fond of cheriſhing thoſe melancholy and diſtreſſing ideas, during the hours of retirement and meditation. It is in ſolitude, and during the intervals of ſocial intercourſe, that the natural gloom of an Engliſh dipoſition broods over ideal calamities and fictitious evils; rears on the thin and ærial baſis of caprice and whim the ſtupendous ſtructure of ſelf-created miſeries, and ſhakes from its ſolid bed the firm rock of real and ſubſtantial happineſs. It is not in the power of human art to redreſs theſe fancied griefs or imaginary evils.

At no period of time ſince the memorable Revolution in 1688, does England appear to have been more happily ſituated

ated, with regard to her domeſtic and internal enjoyments, than at this preſent moment.

I wiſh ſhe knew the value of them; ſhe never was more highly revered by her foreign allies, or more dreaded by her natural enemies.

Whoever has conſidered the internal ſtructure of the French Government, immediately previous to the recent revolution, muſt have obſerved the abſolute neceſſity of a total Reformation; but Reformation was a work ſcarcely adequate to that neceſſity of the times: the original form of Government was ſo mutilated, its component parts ſo diverſely diſtracted each from each, that it required more than human ability ever to recompoſe them; it called for the aſſiſtance of a divine

vine inſpiration, ever to reeſtabliſh the original harmony of its organization.

That balance of power which muſt neceſſarily exiſt, to preſerve good order, in every well regulated ſociety, was there totally deſtroyed; one body of the Community inſolently trampled on the rights of the other; that portion of Liberty naturally aſſigned to them by the original principles of their Government, was wreſted from the weaker by the ſtronger power; not a veſtige of it was ſuffered to remain: the moſt abject ſlavery on one hand, and on the other the moſt imperious deſpotiſm, cauſed a diſtortion of parts, which was at firſt attended with violent and inceſſant convulſions, and which terminated only with the exiſtence of the object.

The Church never interferes in political diſputes but from motives of inte-

reſt. When once the ſpirit of religious controverſy is rouſed; when contending ſects diſpute for the preeminence, the tranquillity of the Country is diſturbed; but when the eſtabliſhed Church itſelf becomes a party, its deareſt intereſts are endangered. In France the eccleſiaſtic aſcendancy over every other part of the Body Politic was enormous; it infringed the primitive principles of the Conſtitution, and united with the deſpotic meaſures of a weak and trifling Prince, alienated the minds of his Subjects from every idea of regenerating a monarchical eſtabliſhment. It is not for me here to determine how far the undue influence of prejudice, or enthuſiaſtic infatuation of bigotry may have tranſgreſſed the limited bounds of policy and prudence. It is generally admitted, that the effervescence of democratic fury for a while knows no reſtraint; that popular phrenzy aſſumes

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dictatorial authority; that reſentment preſuppoſes guilt, and that the will of an intoxicated rabble officiates in the triple capacity of evidence, judge, and executioner.

The truth of theſe aſſertions are inconteſtibly proved by the general infringement of every principle of juſtice and humanity, by the Pariſian mob.

But I will not here attempt to paint, with the glowing colours of a Burke, the train of accumulated horrors attendant on the firſt efforts of France for general independence, and univerſal liberty. I will not fly to the regions of fancy for ſtriking images or fictitious tales; let facts ſpeak for themſelves, for their's is the language of truth. Indeed theſe horrid facts are too widely diffuſed, too generally known for any man to doubt their au-

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thenticity : it is not therefore requiſite, that I ſhould collect them here for your peruſal ; but let a friend, let a fellow-citizen adviſe you to impreſs them ſtrongly on your minds ; a recollection of them may check the uplifted arm in the hour of guilt, and procraſtinate the ſeaſon of remorſe.

The great attribute of cowardice is barbarity ; that of courage humanity : and as cool and intrepid valour conſtitutes the characteriſtic feature of the Britiſh diſpoſition, I reſt fully ſatisfied that if the inſidious artifices of malevolent incendiaries for a while diſturb the tranquillity of theſe realms, that the harmony of general good order will be reeſtabliſhed without thoſe ſcenes of accumulated guilt, which have marked the ſteady progreſs of rebellion in France.

I am

I am unwilling to believe, that the natural good ſenſe of Engliſhmen can be ſo perverted as to adopt meaſures evidently inimical to the common and general intereſts of ſociety; and yet there is an honeſt candour, an unſuſpecting openneſs in our diſpoſitions too eaſily impoſed upon by the artifices of deſigning hypocrites.

My intention by theſe obſervations is merely to caution you againſt characters of this deſcription; and to convince you, that any change in our preſent form of Government can only tend to the annihilation of public happineſs, and the total diſſolution of the real welfare of the community.

It is difficult to aſcertain the wiſhes of thoſe Republican Levellers, who are diſcontented they know not why, and grum-

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ble at they know not what. They would cheriſh and encourage principles without foundation; and would entirely new model a Conſtitution, which daily experience convinces us is nearly perfect, and which unqueſtionably deſerves the appellation of the moſt perfect ſyſtem of ethicks in exiſtence.

Let us, however, ſincerely hope, that their wiſhes may be diſappointed; their artifices fruſtrated, and themſelves conſigned to puniſhment or oblivion, before their exertions can prevail to contaminate the ſpirit of Britiſh Loyalty. If we take a general ſurvey of the different orders of ſociety in England, from the Monarch to the Peaſant, we ſhall find the ſtamp of happineſs impreſſed on every ſtation, and each under an equal protection from the Law. From the ſtudied exertions of the various Members of Adminiſtration; from the pointed attention

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of Royalty itſelf to the intereſts, protection, and happineſs of the Community, we feel our Country riſing to a degree of eminence in the Cabinet of Europe unknown to her before: her private and internal reſources, which have always been more than ſufficient to anſwer the direct exigencies of the State, are daily increaſing, and without ſeditious interruption, muſt continue to accumulate. Superior to every rival, ſhe ſtands alone the chief Arbitreſs of European Politics.

In a ſituation ſo enviable in every reſpect, ſurrounded by every bleſſing the moſt luxuriant fancy can picture to itſelf; feared for our courage; revered for our Conſtitution; honoured for our fidelity, and bleſſed with a Monarch eminent for his virtues, who reigns in the heart of every honeſt man in the Realm, what can the moſt diſcontented being reaſonably wiſh for? Gallic Licentiouſneſs, and Britiſh

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Independence, bear no reſemblance to each other. The firſt flaſhes on the ſight with all the phoſphoric glare of a paſſing meteor; while the other ſhines with the full and ſteady radiance of a noon-day Sun. The ſpeculative botaniſt may, to amuſe his idle hours, graft on the ſame tree a vaſt variety of fruits; but by one trifling error, or one nipping froſt, may loſe his labour and reward;—while the more prudent gardener, who leaves each different tree in its native ſoil to bloſſom and mature, laughs at the various changes of the ſeaſon, and ſees his harveſt

"Better his beſt Hopes."

Let us then leave the genuine Tree of Liberty, ſo long a native of our land, to bloſſom and mature:—let us not engraft on it the ſickly ſhoots of Gallic licentiouſneſs; but let that nation of frivolity plant their favourite ſprigs of momentary freedom, wherever force, or rebellion can prevail,

prevail, amidſt the noiſy acclamations of fancied emancipation. It is to be hoped they will not find every ſoil congenial to its growth;—the breath of Loyalty in England at leaſt

"Shall blaſt the puny ſapling e'er it ſtrikes."

Let me here aſk the candid reader, what are the advantages to be derived from a ſyſtem of Liberty founded on injuſtice; raiſed by cruelty, and ſupported by licentiouſneſs? Yet this is the boaſted Liberty of France. The merits of Miniſters in this Country are always meaſured by the immediate ſucceſſes of their Adminiſtration. To fail, though in the full exerciſe of every political duty, is to be criminal. The acknowledged fallibility of all human plans—the frequent inefficacy of all human negociations, ſhould ſometimes plead for the unſucceſsful exertions of the Miniſter, as well as the Man:—various oppreſſing obſtacles may unexpectedly

edly ariſe, to turn the intended courſe of his meaſures; concealed deceitful enemies may often cauſe miſcarriages, by ſecret blows, or clandeſtine machinations. In ſhort, the merits of a Miniſter are not to be determined by his immediate ſucceſſes, but by his faithful exertions in ſupport of conſtitutional principles. Even ſhould the moſt intrepid courage, and moſt approved experience be united in the conduct of a General, his individual exertions, if unſupported by his fellow-ſoldiers, muſt prove ineffectual.

The cenſure due to the puſillanimity or villainy of his aſſociates, is, however, too frequently annexed to himſelf: it is thus with the Miniſter. Although he be in himſelf poſſeſſed of every requiſite to form the finiſhed Stateſman, if want of ability or inclination is ſuffered to influence the minds of his colleagues, his character alone

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is unjuſtly cenſured as the more oſtenſible delegate of Sovereign Authority. Our preſent able Miniſter has been long and juſtly eſteemed worthy the entire confidence of his Sovereign; he has been long entruſted by the unanimous conſent of the People of England, with the preſervation of its deareſt privileges, and he has long ſince proved himſelf worthy the truſt repoſed in him by his upright integrity, and the honeſt ſupport of his political ſentiments.

I thought it my duty, in a few words, to ſupport the character of the Miniſter, to vindicate it from the aſperſions and inſignificant abuſes of ſtill more inſignificant cavillers; for this reaſon, that every eye is at this moment fixed on him. The probability of approaching hoſtilities, the general armament, and equipment of a naval force, the unexpected embodying

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of our domeſtic forces, all conſpire to raiſe the greateſt anxieties in the breaſt of every loyal individual; and in proportion as we are more or leſs prejudiced againſt the cauſe, it will require a greater or leſs degree of ſucceſs in the effect to ſatisfy our prejudices. But as the Miniſter has hitherto conducted himſelf with ability and integrity, let us give energy to his meaſures, by the moſt unanimons ſupport; let us ſtand firmly by him in the hour of danger and neceſſity, and there is little doubt but that he will now, as on every other occaſion, at once ſupport the dignity of the Empire, and preſerve the happineſs of the People.

The natural Rights of Man, however ſome ſeditious individuals may vociferate, are nowhere held ſo religiouſly ſacred and inviolate as in this Country: a free

delivery

delivery of opinion on political or religious ſubjects is denied to no man, while he modeſtly reſtrains his ideas within the pale of theory and ſpeculation. But it is a duty incumbent on the Executive Power to puniſh thoſe men ſeverely who would inſolently put in practice the momentary ſuggeſtions of a weak or vicious imagination; who would fooliſhly trifle with, or villainouſly infringe the happineſs of his fellow creature.

The advantages to be derived from our preſent Government are not proportioned to the rank or property of the man; all equally ſhare its bleſſings or its faults; an equal, extenſive, and impartial diſtribution of juſtice, gives a ſecurity to property, without which poſſeſſion itſelf would loſe half its value.

If

If we examine hiſtories of thoſe countries which have enjoyed the comforts of liberty, and then compare them with that of England from the time of the immortal Alfred to the preſent hour, how different are the ſcenes preſented to us? how different the feelings we experience? The Genius of Liberty has ſmiled on every country at ſome one particular period; but the clouds of deſpotiſm and oppreſſion have darkened the political horizon, and gradually obſcured her luſtre, and except in England, the Sun of Liberty is ſet.

We have maintained our privileges againſt the united efforts of violence and oppreſſion; we have withſtood the ſhocks of time, and ſtill preſerve our Freedom in its native purity. The independence of other realms reſembles that of the grovelling tortoiſe, poſſeſſed of privileges they ſcarcely

ſcarcely know the value of, and knowing cannot exerciſe them: ours bears a juſt reſemblance to the towering eagle, and ſoars beyond the limited range aſſigned to common ſights.

FINIS.

BRITISH MUSEUM